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A Vermont Conscience

CPYRGHT

● Franklin B. Smith

SOME VERMONTERS RAISED THEIR eyebrows recently when the U.S. Senate secretary reported quarterly salaries paid to public servants on the staffs of Vermont's Senators George D. Aiken and Winston L. Prouty.



Senator Aiken's executive secretary and Senator Prouty's administrative assistant each made \$4,359 for the three months of April, May and June. If we multiply this amount by four, we discover that they apparently are receiving yearly salaries of \$17,436.

Breaking this down, we find that these assistants are receiving weekly salaries of \$335.31 (which include paid vacations). Assuming that they work 40-hour weeks, this means that they are paid \$8.38 an hour.

Senator Aiken's legislative aide and Senator Prouty's legislative assistant also receive salaries in excess of \$15,000 per year.

How do these salaries compare to those of government officials? The Treasurer of the United States makes \$17,000; the State Department's chief of protocol makes \$16,530; even the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (currently Allen W. Dulles) makes only \$21,000.

IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT MORE about these Senatorial staff salaries, I wrote to Jim Whittemore of Congressional Quarterly. He referred me to a 1953 study of salaries and allowances made by the Library of Congress' Legislative Reference Service.

This report said that "the complexity of the law in the matter of allowances for adminis-

trative assistants and clerks to Senators is such that figures cannot be furnished with any degree of accuracy. For specific information, hereon questions should be directed to the Disbursing Office, United States Senate."

However, Whittemore says that "the information is not available from the Disbursing Office. The employees there evidently feel this information should not be released."

WHITTEMORE GOES ON TO SAY:

"On the average the yearly salary for an administrative or legislative assistant runs from \$15,000 to \$17,000. Each Senator may pay his staff what he personally feels justifiable. The Senator is given a yearly sum which is somewhere between \$90,000 and \$160,000 a year with which to pay office help.

"The answers to your two questions are: Yes, most Senatorial assistants receive paychecks in the range of \$15,000 to \$17,500; and each Senator does receive a staff allowance to be divided whichever way he chooses.

"I wish I could give you the exact amount but it seems to be a well-guarded secret. The complexity of the U.S. Code on Senate allowances is extremely difficult to decipher for a layman."

CERTAINLY, IT WOULD BE UNFAIR FOR me to criticize the salaries paid to members of Vermont's Congressional staffs when most other Senatorial assistants receive about equal paychecks.

But speaking as a taxpayer who helps to pay these salaries, a yearly paycheck of \$17,436 sounds rather excessive for a government secretary.